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Remarks

Claims 1-31 are pending in the instant application. Claim 1 of the present invention has been amended to recite that the first and second side margins are attached to said side edges of said absorbent chassis. Support for this amendment appears throughout the specification, and in particular at page 14, lines 27-30. Claim 23 of the present invention has been amended to more clearly recite that which is claimed and to recite that the fastener is configured to engage the exterior surface of the absorbent chassis in the front waist region upon disengagement of the releasable joint. **A Version Of The Claims Reflecting The Changes Made** is submitted herewith as Appendix A. Based on the amendments and remarks made herein, Applicants respectfully request that the rejections be withdrawn and that the application be passed to allowance.

Priority

In the Office Action mailed December 31, 2001, the Examiner indicates that the Applicants have not complied with at least one of the conditions for receiving the benefit of an earlier filing date under 35 U.S.C. § 120. Specifically, the Examiner states that the Applicants "has (*sic*, have) failed to put in the declaration or the specification, what application and/or US patent this is a continuation in-part of." Applicants disagree.

Applicants direct the Examiner to the Transmittal Letter submitted with the application on November 3, 2000. At the top of page 2 of the Transmittal Letter, Applicants request that the application be amended to include a reference to application serial number 09/216,545. Moreover, the Filing Receipt for the present application, mailed April 3, 2001, also acknowledges the Applicants' claim for priority to the above referenced application. As such, Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner enter the amendment requested in the Transmittal Letter mailed November 3, 2000 in recognition of Applicants' proper claim for priority under 35 U.S.C. §120.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. §112

In the Office Action mailed December 31, 2001, the Examiner rejects claims 1-13 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, Second Paragraph, as allegedly being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter that Applicants regard as the invention. This rejection is respectfully **traversed** as it may apply to the presently presented claims.

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The Examiner believes that "[t]here is insufficient antecedent basis..." for the element "said side edge of said absorbent chassis" in lines 13 and 16." Applicants disagree. Claim 1, as amended, refers to the "...side edges of said absorbent chassis...." in lines 13 and 16. Antecedent basis for "side edges" is set forth in Claim 1 at line 7. Based on the foregoing, Applicants respectfully request that the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §112, Second Paragraph, be withdrawn.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. §102(b)

Long Does Not Disclose Each and Every Element of the Claimed Invention

In the Office Action mailed December 31, 2001, the Examiner rejects claims 1-8, 10-12, 14-17 and 19-21 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as allegedly being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,624,429 issued April 29, 1997, to Long et al. (hereinafter "Long"). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

The Examiner believes that Long discloses an absorbent article with a front waist region, a back waist region and a crotch region. The Examiner also believes that Long discloses an absorbent chassis with laterally opposed side edges, and a pair of longitudinally opposed waist edges, forming a waist opening and leg openings, and a pair of opposed side panels located in the front and back waist regions. The Examiner also believes that Long discloses each of the panels having a first side margin that is permanently attached to the side edge in the back waist region, and a second side margin that is releasably attached to the front waist region, using fasteners. The Examiner also believes that Long discloses (that) the fasteners are permanently attached to the second side margin where the fastener defines a fastener edge that has a length that is shorter than the releasable joint of the second margin. Applicants disagree.

In order to be anticipatory, a reference must explicitly or implicitly disclose each and every element of the claimed invention. Long relates to adhesive tape fastening systems and interlocking, mechanical-type fastening systems which can be employed with disposable articles (See Col. 1, lines 8-10). In particular, the invention described by Long includes a fastening system that provides improved securement with greater resistance to premature pop-opens, and can also provide improved fit, greater comfort, and reduced irritation of the wearer's skin (See Col. 1, lines 60-63).

Independent claim 1 of the present invention is directed to a pant-like, refastenable, disposable absorbent article. The absorbent article includes, *inter alia*, an absorbent chassis, a

pair of opposed side panels and a fastener attached to each of the second side margins of the side panels. The side panels extend outward from and between the side edges of the absorbent chassis in the front waist region and the back waist region to define a waist opening and a pair of leg openings. The second side margins of the side panels are releasably attached to the absorbent article to provide a releasable joint. The fastener defines a fastener edge length in the longitudinal direction and the releasable joint defines a releasable joint length in the longitudinal direction, where the releasable joint length is greater than the fastener edge length.

Long does not disclose, either explicitly or implicitly, each and every element of the claimed invention; in fact, Long fails to disclose several elements of the invention recited in claim 1. First, Long fails to disclose an absorbent article having a pair of side panels that extend outward from and between the side edges of the absorbent chassis to define a waist opening and a pair of leg openings. Instead, Long discloses at Col. 4, lines 43-46 that the side edge margins (110) define leg openings. Moreover, the Examiner, at page 3 of the Office Action, appears to recognize this aspect of Long by stating "Long discloses an absorbent chassis with laterally opposed side edges, and a pair of longitudinally opposed waist edges, forming a waist opening and leg openings..." It is not sufficient that Long discloses waist and leg openings without the leg and waist openings being defined by a pair of side panels, as set forth in MPEP 2131, "[t]he elements must be arranged [in the reference] as required by the claim...." Accordingly, Long neither discloses each and every element of the present invention, nor arranges the elements as required by claim 1.

Second, Long fails to disclose a fastener permanently attached to each of the second side margins of the side panels where the fastener defines a fastener edge length in the longitudinal direction and the releasable joint defines a releasable joint length in the longitudinal direction, where the releasable joint length is greater than the fastener edge length. The Examiner asserts that portions of the composite assembly (72) of Long disclose portions of the present invention. Specifically, the composite assembly (72) of Long includes a member called a "side panel" (90) which the Examiner believes to disclose the first side margins of the side panels of the present invention, and that the "carrier layer" (56) of the composite assembly (72) of Long discloses the second side margins of the side panels of the present invention. Further, the Examiner asserts that the hook elements (54) of Long disclose the releasable joint of the present invention, but also appears to suggest that the hook elements (54) of Long also

disclose the fastener of the present invention. Applicants submit that it is unclear what element of Long the Examiner asserts to be the fastener of the present invention. However, assuming that the Examiner is making the suggestion as set forth above, it is also unclear to the Applicants how the same element of Long (54) can simultaneously have two lengths, one of which is greater than the other. Therefore, Applicants assert that Long does not disclose a releasable joint in addition to a fastener, and further, that Long does not disclose a releasable joint length that is greater than the fastener length. For at least the reasons set forth above, Applicants respectfully submit that independent claim 1 is patentable over Long. Moreover, claims 2-13, which depend from independent claim 1, are also accordingly patentable over Long.

With respect to claim 8, it appears that in the Office Action dated December 31, 2001, that the Examiner does not set forth how Long discloses a releasable joint length that is at least about two times greater than the fastener length. MPEP 707.07 requires an Examiner's action be complete and clear. As the Examiner has not set forth the basis for rejecting claim 8 over Long, Applicants submit that the burden has not shifted to the Applicants with respect to this claim. Nonetheless, as discussed above, Applicants assert that Long does not disclose a releasable joint length that is greater than the fastener length, and it is therefore unclear how Long discloses an absorbent article having a releasable joint length that is at least about two times greater than the fastener edge length. Based on the foregoing, Applicants respectfully request that the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) be withdrawn.

Independent claim 14 of the present invention is directed to a pant-like, refastenable, disposable absorbent article. The absorbent article includes, *inter alia*, an absorbent chassis, a pair of opposed back panels, a pair of opposed front panels, and a fastener attached to each of the front panels. The back panels are permanently attached to the side edges of the absorbent chassis in the back waist region of the absorbent article. The front panels are releasably attached to the side edges of the absorbent chassis in the front waist region of the absorbent article to provide a pair of releasable joints. The front panel and the back panel on each side edge of the absorbent chassis are connected together along a side seam to define a waist opening and a pair of leg openings. The fasteners are configured to refastenably engage the exterior surface of the absorbent chassis in the front waist region, where the fasteners define a fastener edge length in the longitudinal direction and the releasable joints define a releasable

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joint length in the longitudinal direction, where the releasable joint length is greater than the fastener edge length.

As discussed above, Applicants maintain that Long does not disclose, either explicitly or implicitly, side panels forming the waist and leg openings of the absorbent article, a releasable joint in addition to a fastener, and further, that Long does not disclose a releasable joint length that is greater than the fastener length. Moreover, in the Office Action dated December 31, 2001, Applicants submit that it appears that the Examiner neglected to address how Long anticipates the absorbent article of the present invention claimed in Independent claim 14. As mentioned above, MPEP 707.07 requires that an Examiner's action be complete and clear. Specifically, MPEP 707.07(d) states that "[a] plurality of claims should never be grouped together in a common rejection, unless that rejection is equally applicable to all claims in the group." Therefore, Applicants assert that with respect to claim 14, the burden has not shifted to the Applicants to move forward. Nonetheless, Applicants submit that in addition to the deficiencies recited above, Long does not disclose several other elements of the invention of the present invention of claim 14. For example, Long neither discloses an absorbent article having a pair of front panels and a pair of back panels nor an absorbent article having a pair of side seams. Therefore, for at least the reasons set forth above, Applicants respectfully submit that independent claim 14 is patentable over Long. Moreover, claims 15-17 and 19-21, which depend from independent claim 14, are also accordingly patentable over Long. Based on the foregoing, Applicants respectfully request that the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) be withdrawn.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

Long Does Not Teach or Suggest All the Claim Limitations and There Is No Suggestion or Motivation to Modify Long

In the Office Action mailed December 31, 2001, the Examiner rejects claims 23-26 and 28-30 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Long. This rejection is respectfully **traversed** as it may apply to the presently presented claims.

The Examiner believes that "Long discloses the claimed invention except for the second side margin being permanently bonded to the front waist, and the fasteners releasably engaging the first and second side margins together." The Examiner believes it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art "to have the second side margin be permanently

bonded to the front waist and the fastener releasably engaging the first and second side margins, since it has been held that rearranging parts of an invention involves only routing (*sic* routine) skill in the art." Applicants disagree.

In order to establish a *prima facie* case of obviousness, three basic criteria must be met: (1) there must be some suggestion or motivation, either in the references themselves or in the knowledge generally available to one of ordinary skill in the art, to modify the reference or to combine reference teachings; (2) there must be a reasonable expectation of success; and (3) the prior art reference (or references when combined) must teach or suggest all the claim limitations. MPEP §2143. Claim 23 of the present invention is directed to a pant-like, refastenable, disposable absorbent article. The absorbent article includes, *inter alia*, an absorbent chassis, a pair of opposed back panels, a pair of opposed front panels, and a fastener attached to each of the back panels. The back panels are permanently attached to the side edges of the absorbent chassis in the back waist region of the absorbent article. The front panels are permanently attached to the side edges of the absorbent chassis in the front waist region of the absorbent article. The front panel and the back panel on each side edge of the absorbent chassis are refastenably connected together along a side seam to define a waist opening and a pair of leg openings. The fastener is configured to refastenably engage one of the front panels and upon disengagement of the releasable joints, the exterior surface of the absorbent chassis in the front waist region, where the fastener defines a fastener edge length in the longitudinal direction and the releasable joint defines a releasable joint length in the longitudinal direction, where the releasable joint length is greater than the fastener edge length.

As discussed above, Long fails to disclose an absorbent article having side panels forming the waist and leg openings of the absorbent article, a releasable joint in addition to a fastener, and further, Long does not disclose a releasable joint length that is greater than the fastener length. Moreover, Long neither discloses an absorbent article having a pair of front panels and a pair of back panels nor an absorbent article having a pair of side seams. Thus, Applicants respectfully assert that Long simply does not teach or suggest all the claim limitations.

In addition, Applicants further assert that there is no motivation or suggestion to modify Long in the manner suggested by the Examiner. While Applicants recognize that the Examiner believes that rearranging parts of an invention involves only routine skill, MPEP 2144.04(VI)(C) states that "[t]he mere fact that a worker in the art could rearrange the parts of the reference

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device to meet the terms of the claims...is not by itself sufficient to support a finding of obviousness. The prior art must provide a motivation or reason for the worker in the art, without the benefit of [applicant's] specification, to make the necessary changes in the reference device." Thus, despite the Examiner's assertion presented above, the Examiner fails to provide any suggestion or motivation to modify Long. Accordingly, for at least the reasons set forth above, Applicants submit that the Examiner has not set forth a *prima facie* case of obviousness and therefore claim 23 is patentable over Long. Moreover, claims 24-26 and 28-30, which depend from independent claim 23, are also accordingly patentable over Long.

In the Office Action mailed December 31, 2001 the Examiner also rejects claims 9, 18 and 27 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Long. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

The Examiner acknowledges that Long fails to disclose the releasable bond of the second margin being three times greater in length than that of the fastener edge. However, the Examiner believes that "...it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to have to (*sic*, the) length of the releasable bond being three times greater than the length of the fastener edge, since it has been held that discovering an optimum value of a result effective variable involves only routine skill in the art." Applicants disagree.

The requirements for a *prima facie* case of obviousness are set forth above. Claim 9 depends from claim 1. Claim 18 depends from claim 14. Claim 27 depends from claim 23. Accordingly, each of the above claims includes all of the elements of the claims from which they depend. In addition, as set forth above, Long does not disclose each and every element of the above independent claims. As such, Applicants respectfully assert that Long simply does not teach or suggest all the claim limitations.

In addition, Applicants further assert that there is no motivation or suggestion to modify Long in the manner suggested by the Examiner. While Applicants recognize that the Examiner believes that discovering an optimum value of a result effective variable involves only routine skill in the art, MPEP 2144.05(II)(B) states that "[a] particular parameter must first be recognized as a result-effective variable, i.e., a variable which achieves a recognized result, before the determination if the optimum or workable ranges of said variable might be characterized as routine experimentation." Thus, despite the Examiner's assertion, the Examiner fails to provide any suggestion or motivation to modify Long, and has failed to

demonstrate that the elements of claims 9, 18 and 27 are recognized in the art as result-effective. Accordingly, Applicants submit that the Examiner has not set forth a *prima facie* case of obviousness and claims 9, 18 and 27 are patentable over Long.

Elsberg is disqualified as prior art under 35 U.S.C. § 103.

In the Office Action mailed December 31, 2001, the Examiner rejects claims 13, 22 and 31 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Long in view of WO 99/65438 published December 23, 1999 in the name of Elsberg (hereinafter "Elsberg"). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

The Examiner acknowledges that Long fails to teach the use of the releasable joints including releasable bonds that are ultrasonic bonds. However, the Examiner asserts that Elsberg discloses the use of passive side bonds that can be ultrasonic point bonds. The Examiner also believes that it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to have the releasable joint of Long, include the ultrasonic points (*sic*, point) bonds of Elsberg..." Applicants respectfully submit that the rejections are improper in view of MPEP 706.02(I)(1).

MPEP 706.02(I)(1) is directed to "Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. 102(e)/103". The section states that "...subject matter which was prior art under former 35 U.S.C. 103 via 35 U.S.C. 102(e) is now disqualified as prior art against the claimed invention if that subject matter and the claimed invention 'were, at the time the invention was made, owned by the same person or subject to an obligation of assignment to the same person.'" This section applies to all applications filed on or after November 29, 1999.

The present invention claims priority to U.S. patent application 09/216,545 filed December 18, 1998, and commonly assigned to Kimberly-Clark Worldwide, Inc. As such, Elsberg, which published on December 23, 1999, is prior art with respect to the instant application under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e). Moreover, the present application was filed on November 3, 2000 (that is, after November 29, 1999). While the Applicants recognize that the present invention is a continuation in part, the element of the present invention for which the Examiner relies on Elsberg (i.e. ultrasonic point bonds) is disclosed in the application from which the present invention claims priority.

Elsberg is disqualified as prior art against the present application because both are assigned to Kimberly-Clark Worldwide, Inc. Specifically, assignment of the present application

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was recorded on November 3, 2000 at reel number 011310 and frame number 0382.

Ownership of Elsberg is reflected by the listing of Kimberly-Clark Worldwide, Inc. as the Applicant on the cover sheet of the PCT Application.

Thus, based on MPEP 706.02(I)(1), Applicants respectfully submit that all the rejections under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) over Elsberg should be withdrawn. Therefore, Applicants are not responding at this time to the substantive portion of the Examiner's rejections and based on the foregoing, respectfully request that the rejections under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) be withdrawn.

Prior Art Made of Record and Not Relied Upon


Applicants have reviewed the references cited by the Examiner but not relied upon in rejecting the claims. However, Applicants assert the cited references fail to teach or suggest the invention recited in the amended claims. Accordingly, claims 1-31 are patentable over such references.

In view of the above remarks, reexamination, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections of claims 1-31 under 35 U.S.C. §§ 112, second paragraph, 102 and 103 are respectfully requested. Moreover, it is respectfully submitted that all of the presently presented claims are in form for allowance and such action is earnestly solicited.

Please charge any prosecutorial fees which are due to Kimberly-Clark Worldwide, Inc. deposit account number 11-0875. The undersigned may be reached at: (920) 721-3862.


Respectfully submitted,

JENNIFER E. POZNIAK ET AL.

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CERTIFICATE OF MAILING

I, Mary L. Roberts, hereby certify that on April 10, 2002 this document is being deposited with the United States Postal Service as first-class mail, postage prepaid, in an envelope addressed to: Box NON-FEE AMENDMENT, Assistant Commissioner for Patents, Washington, D.C. 20231.

By: 
Mary L. Roberts

Appendix A – Version of Claims That Reflect the Changes Made

1. (Once Amended) A pant-like, refastenable, disposable absorbent article which defines a front waist region, a back waist region, a crotch region which extends between and connects said waist regions, a longitudinal direction and a lateral direction, said absorbent article comprising:

a) an absorbent chassis which defines an exterior surface, an interior surface opposite said exterior surface, a pair of laterally opposed side edges and a pair of longitudinally opposed waist edges;

b) a pair of opposed side panels which extend outward from and between said side edges of said absorbent chassis in said front waist region and said back waist region of said absorbent article to define a waist opening and a pair of leg openings in said pant-like disposable absorbent article, wherein each of said opposed side panels defines a first side margin, said first side margins [which is] permanently attached to said side edges of said absorbent chassis in one of said front waist region and said back waist region of said absorbent article to provide a permanent joint, and a second side margin, said second side margins [which is] releasably attached to said side edges of said absorbent chassis in an opposite waist region of said absorbent article to provide a releasable joint; and

c) a fastener permanently attached to each of said second side margins of said side panels, wherein said fastener defines a fastener edge length in said longitudinal direction and said releasable joint defines a releasable joint length in said longitudinal direction, wherein said releasable joint length is greater than said fastener edge length.

2. The absorbent article of claim 1 wherein said absorbent chassis comprises:

a) an outer cover;

b) a bodyside liner which is connected to said outer cover in a superposed relation; and

c) an absorbent core disposed between said outer cover and said bodyside liner.

3. The absorbent article of claim 1 wherein said fasteners are configured to refastenably engage said exterior surface of said absorbent chassis in said opposite waist region to assist in providing said releasable joint.
4. The absorbent article of claim 1 wherein said fasteners are hook and loop type fasteners.
5. The absorbent article of claim 3 and further comprising at least one attachment panel which is located on said exterior surface of said absorbent chassis wherein said fasteners are refastenably engaged to said attachment panel.
6. The absorbent article of claim 3 wherein said absorbent chassis includes an outer cover which provides said exterior surface of said absorbent chassis and wherein said fasteners are refastenably engaged directly to said outer cover of said absorbent chassis.
7. The absorbent article of claim 1 wherein said side panels are extensible at least in said lateral direction.
8. The absorbent article of claim 1 wherein said releasable joint length is at least about two times greater than said fastener edge length.
9. The absorbent article of claim 1 wherein said releasable joint length is at least about three times greater than said fastener edge length.
10. The absorbent article of claim 1 and further defining an article centerline in said longitudinal direction wherein each of said fasteners includes a fastener ear that is attached to said second side margin of said side panel and extends inwardly toward said article centerline when in a prefastened configuration.

11. The absorbent article of claim 10 wherein said fastener ears are extensible at least in said lateral direction.

12. The absorbent article of claim 1 wherein each of said releasable joints includes a releasable bond located on said second side margin which releasably bonds said second side margin of said side panels to said side edges of said absorbent chassis in said opposite waist region to assist in maintaining said pant-like, disposable absorbent article in a prefastened condition.

13. The absorbent article of claim 12 wherein said releasable bonds are ultrasonic bonds.

14. A pant-like, refastenable, disposable absorbent article which defines a front waist region, a back waist region, a crotch region which extends between and connects said waist regions, a longitudinal direction and a lateral direction, said absorbent article comprising:

a) an absorbent chassis which defines an exterior surface, an interior surface opposite said exterior surface, a pair of laterally opposed side edges and a pair of longitudinally opposed waist edges;

b) a pair of opposed back panels which are permanently attached to said side edges of said absorbent chassis in said back waist region of said absorbent article;

c) a pair of opposed front panels which are releasably attached to said side edges of said absorbent chassis in said front waist region of said absorbent article to provide a pair of releasable joints wherein said front panel and said back panel on each side edge of said absorbent chassis are connected together along a side seam to define a waist opening and a pair of leg openings and provide said pant-like, releasable, disposable absorbent article; and

d) a fastener permanently attached to each of said front panels adjacent said releasable joint and configured to refastenably engage said exterior surface of said absorbent chassis in said front waist region, wherein said fastener defines a fastener edge length in said longitudinal direction and said releasable joint defines a releasable joint length in said longitudinal direction, wherein said releasable joint length is greater than said fastener edge length.

15. The absorbent article of claim 14 wherein said absorbent chassis includes an outer cover which provides said exterior surface of said absorbent chassis and wherein said fasteners are configured to refastenably engage directly with said outer cover of said absorbent chassis.

16. The absorbent article of claim 14 wherein said side panels are extensible in at least said lateral direction.

17. The absorbent article of claim 14 wherein said releasable joint length is at least about two times greater than said fastener edge length.

18. The absorbent article of claim 14 wherein said releasable joint length is at least about three times greater than said fastener edge length.

19. The absorbent article of claim 14 and further defining an article centerline in said longitudinal direction wherein each of said fasteners includes a fastener ear that is attached to said second side margin of said side panel and extends inwardly toward said article centerline when in a prefastened configuration.

20. The absorbent article of claim 19 wherein each of said fastener ears are extensible in at least said lateral direction.

21. The absorbent article of claim 14 wherein each of said releasable joints includes a releasable bond located on said second side margin which releasably bonds said second side margin of said side panels to said side edges of said absorbent chassis in said opposite waist region to assist in maintaining said pant-like, disposable absorbent article in a prefastened condition.

22. The absorbent article of claim 21 wherein said releasable bonds are ultrasonic bonds.

23. (Once Amended) A pant-like, refastenable, disposable absorbent article which defines a front waist region, a back waist region, a crotch region which extends between and connects said waist regions, a longitudinal direction and a lateral direction, said absorbent article comprising:

a) an absorbent chassis which defines an exterior surface, an interior surface opposite said exterior surface, a pair of laterally opposed side edges and a pair of longitudinally opposed waist edges; and

b) a pair of opposed back panels which are permanently attached to said side edges of said absorbent chassis in said back waist region of said absorbent article;

c) a pair of opposed front panels which are permanently attached to said side edges of said absorbent chassis in said front waist region of said absorbent article wherein said front panel and said back panel are releasably connected together along a side seam to provide a releasable joint and to define a waist opening and a pair of leg openings and provide said absorbent article; and

d) a fastener permanently attached to each of said back panels adjacent said side seams and configured to refastenably engage one of said front panels and upon disengagement of said releasable joints, said exterior surface of said absorbent chassis in said front waist region, wherein said fastener defines a fastener edge length in said longitudinal direction and said releasable joint defines a releasable joint length in said longitudinal direction, wherein said releasable joint length is greater than said fastener edge length.

24. The absorbent article of claim 23 wherein said absorbent chassis includes an outer cover which provides said exterior surface of said absorbent chassis and wherein said fasteners are configured to refastenably engage directly with said outer cover of said absorbent chassis.

25. The absorbent article of claim 23 wherein said side panels are extensible in at least said lateral direction.

26. The absorbent article of claim 23 wherein said releasable joint length is at least about two times greater than said fastener edge length.

27. The absorbent article of claim 23 wherein said releasable joint length is at least about three times greater than said fastener edge length.

28. The absorbent article of claim 23 and further defining an article centerline in said longitudinal direction wherein each of said fasteners includes a fastener ear that is attached to said second side margin of said side panel and extends inwardly toward said article centerline when in a prefastened configuration.

29. The absorbent article of claim 28 wherein said fastener ear is extensible in at least said lateral direction.

30. The absorbent article of claim 23 wherein each of said releasable joints includes a releasable bond located on said second side margin which releasably bonds said second side margin of said side panels to said side edges of said absorbent chassis in said opposite waist region to assist in maintaining said pant-like, disposable absorbent article in a prefastened condition.

31. The absorbent article of claim 30 wherein said releasable bonds are ultrasonic bonds.